

L'SHANAH
TOVAH

לעזאזל
To Azazel

Day of Remembrance

Rosh Hashanah is known as the “day of remembrance” (*Yom Hazikaron*), calling to our minds our ancient ancestors and G-d’s covenant with the His people.

At the beginning of our New Year we make a plea for G-d to be mindful of His people and inscribe our names in the book of life. Considering our great failures, we have no recourse but to appeal to G-d’s mercy and the memory of the promises made to our patriarchs, as well as to the covenant He made with Abraham’s descendants.

Therefore, the narratives and readings from the Torah and prophets on Rosh Hashanah bring all these things back to our remembrance.



The most well known and beloved of Rosh Hashanah observances is the sounding of the ram’s horn, or shofar, to herald the beginning of the new Jewish year. The Torah describes Rosh Hashanah as “a sacred occasion commemorated with loud blasts” (Vayikra 23:24). Several blessings are recited before the blowing of the shofar, then approximately 100 blasts are sounded throughout the rest of the worship services.

Among the various reasons given for the blowing of the shofar is that the coronation of kings in ancient times was supposedly marked with the sounding of a shofar. In addition, because Rosh Hashanah is also a time of spiritual introspection and repentance, the shofar essentially calls us to remember what is truly important in life, and to remind us to mend our ways.

Day of Judgment

It is believed that on Rosh Hashanah, G-d reviews the deeds of all people, and decides what the coming year will be like. If the verdict is a bad one, then we have until Yom Kippur to repent, and have the judgment changed. The “Days of Awe” that follow is our time to turn...

The Afternoon of the First Day of Rosh Hashanah



Tashlich

Although not officially a part of the service, an additional custom developed in medieval times called *Tashlich*, meaning “casting out”, which has become very popular of late. On the afternoon of the first day of Rosh Hashanah, Jewish people gather by a body of water, recite special verses, and then throw crumbs of bread into the water in a symbolic gesture of casting off their sins. Perhaps in an echo of the scapegoat ceremony, the fish are expected to eat the sin-crumbs and bear them away.



A call to remember “Azazel”

Thus, the season of Rosh Hashanah focuses attention on that very interesting character—**Azazel**: our Scapegoat.

The meaning of this term Azazel, has been unclear for much of our history. It has often been identified as a demonic figure to whom the sin-laden scapegoat was sent on the Day of Atonement (Vayikra 16:8, 10, 26). The Hebrew word has been traditionally understood as a phrase meaning “the goat that escapes,” giving us the word

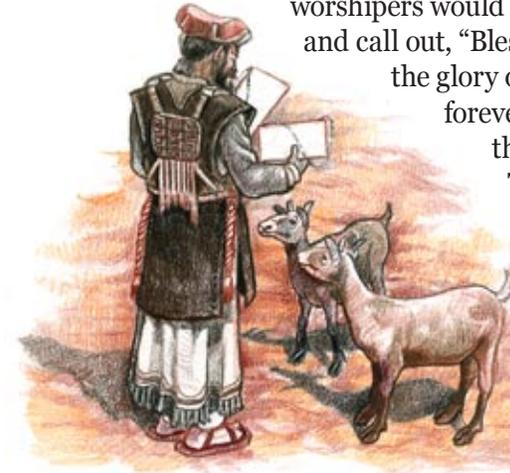
scapegoat. But in the light of modern research, both this interpretation and those that understand it as a place name have been proven incorrect. The word is a proper name and means something like “angry god.”

Vayikra 16

To atone for the sins of the nation, the high priest took two spotless twin goats and cast lots to determine their fate. Depending on how the lots fell, one of the goats was sacrificed as a sin offering for the nation. When this sacrificial goat was appointed, the high priest pronounced,

“For YHWH,” and the throngs of worshipers would fall on their faces and call out, “Blessed be the Name; the glory of His kingdom is forever and ever.” Then the goat was slain.

This is one of the very rare times that the Name



(Ha Shem) was ever pronounced was during the High Priest's prayers on Yom Kippur in the Jerusalem Temple.

Then the other goat, *Azazel*, was released into the wilderness as an atonement. In essence, our sins were placed on another. The little forlorn kid is cast out to the experience the wrath of G-d upon the sins he bears....

The scapegoat, became a second picture of national atonement. The High Priest symbolically placed the sins of the nation on the head of the *Azazel* goat. He did this by laying both of his hands on the goat's head while confessing the sins of the people. Then, with the sins of the people on the head of the goat, the high priest sent the *Azazel* off into the wilderness. It was a dramatic picture of G-d's willingness to separate His people from their sins. In the second temple period (515 B.C. to A.D. 70), the scapegoat was led to a cliff and forced over the brink to make sure it didn't return.



Chosen from among the flock,

*Twin kids of finest stock,
Led away by the hand
To fulfill a great plan.*

The Lots were cast.

*But, alas to the one
chosen last*

*The first, for YHWH, a
sacrifice pure and clean
The second, forlorn with no
one to hear his scream,*

*One set apart in the
temple to die,*

*the other sent off,
with a lonely cry*

*To be spit upon, cursed and pushed into the wild
Bearing the guilt of a nation to reconcile...*

*The look of dismay in the eyes of the one sent away,
Innocent yet condemned to Azazel
To suffer the torment of hell...*

*"No one can deny," I heard them say,
"The look of dismay in the eyes of the one cast away..."*



ראש השנה

ROSH HASHANAH

Significant Greetings by

